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## REVIEWS AND NOTES.

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### CRIMINAL STATISTICS OF INDIANA.

Indiana might silence the lament that not a single state in the Union publishes adequate criminal statistics. This state has the needful law and should have the proper machinery in its long established Statistical Bureau. Elsewhere sufficient legislation to oblige the criminal courts to make returns of their business is lacking, or at best imperfect returns are made to a central office that is not organized for the task of digesting and presenting criminal statistics. As a matter of fact, most of the states do not concern themselves at all with the collection of criminal statistics. But Indiana has a Bureau of Statistics which, among other things, is specifically charged with the duty of collecting criminal judicial statistics. Moreover, the bureau has all the necessary authority in law. It can prescribe the forms in which all courts of criminal jurisdiction shall make their returns as well as the separate items to be included; and, what is almost as important, it can compel the police officials to make returns of arrests, so that the apprehensions for specific offenses can be compared with the disposition of the cases tried by the courts. No other state has the same opportunities at the present time. It is therefore of special interest to learn what is being done.

The Indiana Bureau of Statistics has recently published its thirteenth biennial report, covering the years 1908-09. It is a formidable volume of more than 1200 pages, of which 433 deal with arrests and the disposition of cases in the criminal courts, while 27 pages are given to juvenile court statistics. Under the general title "Social Statistics" is presented not only facts about arrests and the doings of the criminal courts, but statistics of divorce, of coroner's inquests, of liquor licenses, of local option elections, etc. Why not dignify criminal statistics with their proper title? No complaint can be made about a niggardly use of space in spreading the police and court returns before the reader. Indeed, there are no less than 51 blank pages, that is, pages containing only the table skeletons! And 65 pages are merely adorned with from one to three items each. To illustrate: Under the head of "prize fighting," the report shows five blank pages, but on the sixth mention is made of half a dozen cases of this offense. The same number of pages is required to account for two cases of "raffling." But this reckless use of space for the purpose of saying nothing is only one of the minor shortcomings of the Indiana report.

First, there is given a summary table of criminal cases in the circuit and superior courts, showing, by counties, the number of criminal cases filed, dismissed, venued, disposed of; the number of convictions for felonies and misdemeanors, together with the numbers released on probation after conviction; and, lastly, the number of violations of the liquor laws and the number of convictions for such offenses. The summary leaves one wholly in the dark in regard to the numerical proportion of the different classes of

cases filed and dismissed, as well as in regard to the number of cases begun in previous years and disposed of during the biennial period and the number left unfinished although begun in 1908-09. In brief, the summary is of dubious meaning and omits facts of importance to a correct understanding of the business of the criminal courts. Then follow tabular statements of arrests and convictions for the different offenses that constitute felonies under the Indiana law and necessarily come before the circuit and superior courts. The number arrested is shown by sex, color, and nationality, and convictions are classified by the number fined or sent to the different state penal institutions; but no connection can be established between the items of personal description and the items of penalties except where a single individual or at most two or three were concerned. The exceedingly important element of age is ignored altogether. How many of those arrested escaped conviction one cannot tell, for there is no means of knowing how many of them were not brought to trial during the biennial period. Evidently little effort is made to get complete records. Although in regard to nationality the only distinction sought is between native and foreign born the proportion of "unknown" is so enormous that the whole tabulation is worthless. Even in the summary tables of felonies, totals by color, nationality, etc., are lacking.

The misdemeanor cases coming before the circuit and superior courts are tabulated in the same way; likewise the criminal cases coming before the city courts and justices of the peace. There is no summary of the whole criminal business of the Indiana courts, much less one affording the most elementary comparisons. Throughout proper classification and correlation are lacking and of explanatory text there is not a single line; yet the subject-matter is one that calls for intelligent comment in a peculiar sense. These Indiana statistics are simply transcripts of the crude material obtained from court records with a minimum of classification and wholly lacking in competent arrangement. To be sure, the patient student can make a few interesting computations on the basis of some of the figures given. But why should he be put to this tedious process by a bureau which purports to publish statistics of crime? Besides, he would at all times be baffled by elements of uncertainty and lack of facts required to make sure of the meaning of the most ordinary groupings.

The report contains some curiosities by way of nomenclature of offenses and affords one or two strange sidelights upon methods of dealing with certain offenses. Thus it appears that in 1908 the circuit and superior courts of Vigo County (Terre Haute is the chief city) sentenced no less than 1118 persons to imprisonment for drunkenness, while in 1909 apparently not a single person was so sentenced by the same court. In the 119 pages dealing with city courts and showing arrests and disposition of cases for specified offenses, the number of arrests is faithfully entered in each case for 1908 under the head of the Indianapolis city court, but there is nothing to indicate that a single person arrested came before the court in that year. A table dealing with "All other misdemeanors" shows the same condition in respect to this court. But, finally, a summary of "total misdemeanors"

is discovered which indicates that the Indianapolis city court after all was active in 1908. The explanation is, of course, that details were not secured for 1908, yet the reader is left to find this out for himself after wandering over more than 100 pages.

One is pleasantly surprised to find under the head of disposition of cases in justice courts, a statement of the total numbers acquitted as well as the number of cases in which sentence was suspended. How many persons tried for felony were acquitted is not told, as if that were a matter of minor significance.

Measured by the extent and social significance of the criminal statistical material available, the Indiana Bureau would certainly be justified in sending out a large report. During the biennial period 1908-09, more than 97,000 arrests were brought to the attention of the various courts; and of these 4297 were for felonious offenses. It is but a plain statement of fact that the effort to deal statistically with this large material has been a failure. In other states, where the volume of criminal cases may assume even larger proportions, not even an attempt is made to collect and present the facts; and Indiana is at least to be congratulated because there is intelligence enough to require the collection of criminal statistics. But the Indiana Bureau of Statistics cannot expect to be successful so far as the crime business is concerned until it adopts new ideals and radically different statistical methods. The problem is by no means an easy one. It is fairly evident that competent returns from the Indiana courts are not easily obtained. But, with all possible excuse on account of lack of adequate material and other inherent difficulties, it is undeniable that a far different and better use could have been made of the returns at hand.

JOHN KOREN.

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#### MUNICIPAL FINANCES IN MASSACHUSETTS.\*

The state of Massachusetts has recently been making an important experiment in the reform of municipal accounts. The first law † looking to the establishment of uniform accounting systems in the various municipalities of the Commonwealth was passed in 1906. The legislature preferred to proceed indirectly, and the terms of the act were limited to the requirement that the auditor or other accounting officer of each city and town of the state should furnish annually to the Director of the Bureau of Statistics, on blanks and uniform schedules provided by him, a detailed statement covering the chief financial transactions for the preceding fiscal year. This legislation has been amended and supplemented by subsequent acts ‡ looking to the further standardizing of municipal accounts and providing,

\* Second Annual Report of the Statistics of Municipal Finances for City and Town, Fiscal Years Ending between November 30, 1907, and April 6, 1908. By the Director of the Bureau of Statistics, Boston, 1910.

† Chapter 296, Acts of 1906.

‡ Chapter 371, Acts of 1909; Chapter 598, Acts of 1910; Chapter 616, Acts of 1910; Chapter 624, Acts of 1910.